

GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Public Management

PUBP 6017 | Fall 2026

Professor	Travis Whetsell, PhD
Email	travis.whetsell@gatech.edu

Introduction to Course

I designed this class to introduce you to the study and practice of public management. We will use a combination of lectures, readings, test, case study analysis, strategic analysis and presentation. By the end of this course, you will understand the evolution of the field of public management through familiarity with theory and case studies. You will have also developed the skill of memorandum writing and strategic analysis. I have also included substantial content on newer developments in the management of public sector networks, which is one of my areas of research.

About Myself

I am an assistant professor at Georgia Tech. I earned my Ph.D. in public policy and management from the John Glenn College of Public Affairs at The Ohio State University. I also have an M.P.A. degree and a B.A. in political science. My areas of research include public sector networks, science and technology policy, and philosophy of science. If you would like to see my research, most of it is posted on my [google scholar profile](#). I believe all students are capable of success in this course. I believe in challenging students with rigorous coursework, while providing the resources and mentoring to help them succeed. I seek to offer you a supportive learning environment and an intellectually rewarding experience. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you find yourself struggling.

Course Description

Public management is concerned with how political authority is used to create public value and to resolve public problems. Using readings, lectures, discussions, case studies, and strategic analysis, students will examine how public policies are implemented and managed. Students of public management are primarily concerned with how to make the world a better place through effective, efficient, and equitable government. A substantial area of focus will be on the management of public sector networks. Satisfies policy implementation, management and organization theory requirement.

We will attempt to broaden the focus of public management by asking questions about how organizations manage in the public interest. In asking these questions we will explore the management behaviors of public, non-profit, and for-profit organizations.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the development of major theories of public management.
- Apply public-management theories to organizational cases.
- Analyze the interests, power, and expectations of an organization's stakeholders.
- Develop and defend evidence-based recommendations for public managers.
- Communicate management analysis through professional memoranda and oral presentations.

Books

Rainey, H., Fernandez, S. and Malatesta, D. 2021. *Understanding and Managing Public Organizations, the 6th Edition*. Jossey-Bass. The book is free on the O'Reilly App. (Required book)

Lectures

I will be delivering lectures on the topics for the week. Generally, I will be working on these up to the day that I deliver them, so I will post these on canvas after the class day they are delivered. These lectures are based on the readings. Do the readings before class.

Assignments

Grades

Final averages are rounded to the nearest whole number. A = 90–100, B = 80–89, C = 70–79, D = 60–69, and F = below 60. Georgia Tech does not use plus/minus grades.

I like to keep things simple. Every assignment is graded on a percentage basis, 0-100%, and every assignment contributes a certain amount to the overall percentage for the final grade (see breakdown below). Canvas is somewhat clunky and likes points. To facilitate this translation, every assignment thus has 100 points. For the correspondence between percentage to letter grade, I follow the general guidelines set by the institute. Lastly, I do rounding. For example, 89.5 will be rounded up to an A.

- Tests: 30% (3)
- Case Study Memorandum: 15%
- Case Discussion Leadership: 10%
- Stakeholder Analysis: 25%
- Stakeholder Analysis Presentation: 10%
- Class Participation: 10%

Tests, 30%.

Rather than having a midterm and final examination, the course will include three tests. The tests will cover the textbook, additional assigned readings, lectures, and class discussions. Each test will typically contain approximately 30 questions and will be administered in class using a closed-book format.

Case Study Memorandum, 15%.

Students will complete one individual case-study memorandum examining the theories and principles of public management. You may select your own case or use one of the cases covered in the class discussions. Analyze the case in light of the course readings and concepts. The memorandum is an exercise in professional analysis and writing and must satisfy the following requirements:

- Sections: Executive Summary, Problem and Context, Analysis of Alternatives, Recommendation, and Conclusion.

- **Content:** Explain the significance and context of the management or policy problem. Evaluate at least three potential alternatives, make a clear recommendation for action, and apply relevant course concepts to support the analysis.
- **Perspective:** Write from the perspective of a strategic analyst advising an organizational executive. Clearly identify the executive or other decision-maker to whom the memorandum is addressed.
- **Memo format:** Include a standard memorandum header with To, From, Date, and Subject lines.
- **Sources and citations:** Support the analysis with course readings and other relevant sources. Use APA style for in-text citations and the reference list.
- **Length and formatting:** The memorandum should be approximately 1,500–2000 words, excluding the reference list. Use double spacing, 12-point font, one-inch margins, and informative headings. Tables and figures do not count toward the word limit but should support rather than replace the written analysis.

Case Discussion Leadership, 10%.

Students will lead one assigned case discussion. Depending on class size, students may complete this assignment individually or in teams.

Discussion leaders will briefly introduce the case, apply relevant course concepts, pose analytical questions, and moderate approximately 20–30 minutes of class discussion. Assignments will be announced near the beginning of the semester.

Stakeholder Analysis, 25%.

This assignment requires students to select a specific public organization and conduct a strategic analysis of its stakeholder environment.

Depending on class size, students may complete this assignment individually or in teams. The analysis should contain the following sections:

- **Introduction and Background:** Introduce the organization and describe its legal authority, public purpose, principal activities, and operating environment.
- **Strategic Issue:** Identify a specific problem, decision, or opportunity facing the organization. Explain why stakeholder analysis is useful for addressing it.
- **Stakeholder Analysis:** Identify the organization's principal stakeholders and analyze their relative power, interest, and influence. Explain what the most consequential stakeholders expect from the organization, how they evaluate its performance, and where stakeholder interests conflict. Use a stakeholder table, map, or power–interest matrix to organize the analysis.

- **Recommendations:** Explain what the stakeholder analysis reveals about the organization's strategic environment. Recommend how the organization should prioritize, engage, monitor, or respond to its most consequential stakeholders. Address important risks, tradeoffs, and implementation challenges.
- **Conclusion:** Briefly restate the analysis's principal finding and most important recommendation.

The analysis should be 2,500–3,000 words, excluding the reference list. Use double spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font, one-inch margins, page numbers, and informative headings. Tables and figures do not count toward the word limit but should be concise, clearly labeled, and analytically relevant. If the assignment is completed by a team, the team will submit one integrated paper. Use APA style for in-text citations and the reference list. The assignment will be evaluated according to the quality and thoroughness of the research, the identification and analysis of stakeholders, the application of course concepts, the strength and feasibility of the recommendations, the use of supporting evidence, and the clarity and professionalism of the paper.

The Stakeholder Analysis constitutes the course's alternative final assessment and is due at the course's officially designated final-examination date and time.

Stakeholder Analysis Presentation, 10%.

At the end of the semester, students will present a summary of their stakeholder analysis to the class. Depending on class size, students may complete this assignment individually or in teams. Students who complete the stakeholder analysis as a team will deliver the presentation with the same team.

The presentation should be no more than 15 minutes long and should use PowerPoint or equivalent presentation software. Slides should emphasize the structure and central findings of the analysis rather than reproduce the details of the paper. Presenters should explain those details verbally and invite questions and discussion from their classmates.

Class Participation, 10%.

The participation grade will be based on attendance, preparation, and constructive participation in class discussions and activities.

Ungraded Pop Quizzes.

We will use Kahoot for occasional in-class pop quizzes, typically at the end of a lecture. These quizzes are ungraded and are intended to reinforce important concepts from the lectures and readings. You will need a computer or smartphone to participate.

Policies

Integrity and Plagiarism

Students are expected to follow the [Georgia Tech Honor Code](#) and [Student-Faculty Expectations Agreement](#). On plagiarism, presenting another source's words, ideas, or substantially similar material as your own without appropriate attribution may violate the Academic Honor Code. Suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity. Use appropriate attribution practices when in doubt, including quotation marks, paraphrasing, in-text citations, and bibliographic entries, as appropriate to the chosen citation style.

AI Policy

Students are expected to follow the [AI policy guidance](#) established by Georgia Tech. AI tools may support information searches, brainstorming, and learning, but submitted assignments must reflect the student's own reasoning, analysis, organization, and writing. Presenting AI-generated or AI-rewritten work as one's own may constitute a violation of the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code and will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity.

Late Assignments, Absences, and Attendance

Late submissions will be handled on a case-by-case basis but generally will be deducted a letter grade if there is no justification for the late submission. If you miss an exam, makeup exams generally occur in my office (for ODS clients see Accommodations section on makeup exams). If you will miss an exam, email as soon as possible. Attendance in class is crucial. Aside from excused absences, absences will be counted in the attendance grade. The preferred method is to go through the institute approved system for submitting "proof" for excused absences, via the Dean of Student's [website](#). This avoids populating my inbox with, for example, your medical records.

Institute Approved Absences

Students who miss class because of approved Institute activities (such as field trips, professional conferences, and athletic events) will be permitted to make up the work missed during their absences. [Institute-approved absence requests](#) are reviewed by a faculty committee, and the student receives an official letter from the Office of the Registrar as documentation of an approval.

Verification of Participation

For ALL undergraduate and graduate classes that are for credit, billable, and gradable (this includes 7000 and 9000 level thesis hour courses for graduate students), instructors must report to the Registrar's Office and the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid whether they have students enrolled in their classes who are not engaged with the course. This is a Federal Verification of participation and a Federal Title IV requirement.

Incomplete Grades

An incomplete (I) grade will be considered only when, for non-academic reasons beyond the student's control, the student becomes unable to complete the course requirements, has satisfactory academic performance, has made significant progress in completing course assignments, and the remaining work is appropriate for an I grade. If these conditions do not apply, the student will be counseled about other available options.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you require special accommodations contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (ODS) to obtain an accommodations letter, which they will deliver to me. If you require accommodations, contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) and provide me with the Faculty Notification Letter through the ODS process. I will implement the accommodations specified in the letter. If you plan to take exams through ODS, follow ODS scheduling procedures and notify me so that I can complete the required testing agreement and submit the exam materials. If you miss a scheduled ODS exam, contact me and ODS promptly; any makeup will be arranged consistently with your accommodations and ODS procedures. If an emergency prevents you from taking the final examination, an incomplete may be assigned only if the Institute's incomplete-grade requirements are met.

Other Information

Communication Preferences

In person, emails, and video conferences are fine. I generally try to make office hours convenient for you by having them before or after class meeting time depending on when the class takes place. I am generally responsive to emails and attempt to respond in less than 24 hours. If it is the weekend, I may not respond until Monday. I will be logging into canvas frequently throughout the semester to monitor course progress. I

will make my best effort to grade submitted assignments one week after the deadline. I will also communicate to you frequently through canvas announcements.

Electronic Devices

The use of laptops, tablets, or other mobile devices is permitted only for class-related work. Please mute all electronic devices during class. In the event of virtual sessions, keep your microphone muted when not speaking; camera use is encouraged but not required. Do not record class participants without permission, except as authorized through an approved accommodation.

Canvas

I will be using Canvas to distribute information about the course. I try to keep things simple here. The course will progress on a weekly basis with modules mapped to the schedule opening on the Monday of the week. I will also be posting a lot of PDFs and other things like R tutorials to Canvas modules. Aside from instances where holidays interrupt my flow, I like to do lectures on the first class day of the week and tutorials/activities on the second day of the week.

Syllabus Revision

The syllabus may be revised when circumstances require. Changes will be communicated through Canvas with reasonable time for students to adjust and will not be applied retroactively.